

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 MCT-01 HA-05 IO-13
SSM-03 AID-05 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 USIE-00
CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01
SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-12 /099 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7355
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1742

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 30, 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1707 (DTG 291255Z MAR 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. FIGHTING IN THE SOUTH WAS AT A LOW
LEVEL ON MARCH 29. ONE SWEDISH SOLDIER WAS KILLED.
FRENCH FORCES HAVE STILL NOT BEEN ABLE TO TAKE CONTROL
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OF THE QASIMIYAH BRIDGE. SAMIR SABBAGH OF MURABITUN
MADE A MILD STATEMENT ON UNIFIL. DORY CHAMOUN WARNED
THAT THE PALESTINIANS WERE INFILTRATING THE SHUF.
SAUDI ARABIAN AMBASSADOR GAVE THE ARAB DETERRENT
FORCES (ADF) A CHECK FOR \$9 MILLION. THERE WERE
TWO RECONCILIATIONS AMONG LEBANESE FIGURES THIS WEEK.
THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS DISCUSSED AID TO REFUGEES.

END SUMMARY.

2. MILITARY SITUATION

A. ON MARCH 29, FOLLOWING ARAFAT'S PUBLIC PROMISE TO COOPERATE WITH UNIFIL, THERE WAS THE LOWEST LEVEL OF FIGHTING IN SOUTH LEBANON SINCE ISRAEL DECLARED A CEASE-FIRE ON MARCH 21. THE LATEST MILITARY ACTION REPORTED BY THE PALESTINIAN NEWS AGENCY (Wafa) WAS THAT AT 0320 HOURS ON MARCH 28 "OUR COMMANDOS ATTACKED" FIVE ENEMY VEHICLES ON THE ROAD BETWEEN DAYR MIMAS AND Khardali Bridge, DESTROYING TWO VEHICLES. THERE WAS ALSO SCATTERED GUN FIRE IN THE TYRE REGION THROUGHOUT THE DAY ON MARCH 29. IN ADDITION, A RELIABLE DATT SOURCE REPORTED THAT PALESTINIANS FIRED FIVE ROCKETS AT IDF POSITIONS IN ABBASHIYAH WHILE HE WAS VISITING THERE MARCH 29. THE LOCAL IDF COMMANDER SAID THAT HE WAS UNDER STRICT ORDERS NOT TO RETURN FIRE.

B. THE PRINCIPAL REJECTIONIST ORGANIZATION, GEORGE HABBASH'S POPULAR FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE (PFLP), ANNOUNCED IN SURPRISINGLY MODERATE TERMS THAT IT HAD ADOPTED A "WAIT-AND-SEE" ATTITUDE WHILE AWAITING ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL. IN CONTRAST, NAYIF HAWATMAH'S POPULAR DEMOCRATIC FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF PALESTINE (PDFLP) ANNOUNCED THAT
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IT HAD HIT TARGETS IN ABI AL-KAMH IN NORTHERN ISRAEL ON MARCH 29.

C. Wafa NEVERTHELESS SUGGESTED THAT PLO WAS NOT GOING TO FORSWEAR THE USE OF LEBANESE TERRITORY FOR ATTACKS ON ISRAEL. THE NEWS AGENCY QUOTED ABU ADIB, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND A MEMBER OF FATAH CENTRAL COMMITTEE, AS SAYING IN RIYADH ON MARCH 29 THAT: "WHAT THE REVOLUTION WANTS IS THE CREATION OF A NORTHERN FRONT CAPABLE OF SELF DEFENSE AND STEADFASTNESS SO THAT THE COMMANDOS MAY CARRY OUT THEIR OPERATIONS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES THROUGHOUT THIS FRONT."

3. UNIFIL ACTIVITIES.

A. ONE SWEDISH SOLDIER WAS KILLED AND ANOTHER WOUNDED WHEN THEIR JEEP RAN OVER A MINE THE MORNING OF MARCH 29 EAST OF THE Khardali Bridge.

B. FRENCH FORCES HAVE STILL NOT BEEN ABLE TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE QASIMIYAH BRIDGE NORTH OF TYRE,

WHICH REMAINS IN THE HANDS OF THE PALESTINIANS. THE FRENCH HAVE, HOWEVER, ESTABLISHED SIX SMALL POSITIONS AROUND THE OUTSKIRTS OF TYRE. THE FRENCH COMMANDER, COLONEL SALVAN, SAID THAT HE WOULD SUCCEED IN TAKING CONTROL OF THE BRIDGE. HE ADDED THAT "WE WILL USE DIPLOMACY WITH THE PALESTINIANS, BECAUSE FOR US ONE DROP OF BLOOD, THE DEATH OF ONE FRENCH SOLDIER, WOULD BE TOO EXPENSIVE."

4. NATIONAL MOVEMENT STATEMENT ON UNIFIL.

IN A PREPARED STATEMENT READ AT A PRESS CONFERENCE ATTENDED BY LEADERS OF THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT, AL MURABITUN OFFICIAL SAMIR SABBAGH CRITICIZED UNIFIL
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IN RELATIVELY MILD TERMS. HE SAID THAT UNIFIL WAS TAKING UP POSITIONS IN PARTS OF THE SOUTH WHICH WERE NOT OCCUPIED BY ISRAEL. HE CLAIMED THAT SINCE THE TASK OF UNIFIL, AS DEFINED BY UNSC RESOLUTION 425, WAS TO SUPERVISE THE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI FORCES, THE CURRENT DEPLOYMENT CREATED DOUBTS ABOUT UNIFIL'S GOALS.

5. DORY CHAMOUN'S WARNING ON SHUF.

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY DORY CHAMOUN WARNED MARCH 29 THAT THE PALESTINIANS WERE "INFILTRATING" THE SHUF. HE ALSO CHARGED THAT AN ATTEMPT WAS BEING MADE TO INSTIGATE SECTARIAN STRIFE IN THE AREA. (PSP LEADER WALID JUNBLATT TOLD EMBOFF ON MARCH 28 THAT NO PALESTINIANS HAD YET ENTERED THE SHUF, ALTHOUGH HE FEARED CHRISTIANS AND ISRAELIS MIGHT DRIVE THEM UP INTO THE AREA. JUNBLATT ALSO NOTED THAT HE WOULD DO HIS UTMOST TO PREVENT ANY VIOLENCE IN THE SHUF.)

6. SAUDI CONTRIBUTION TO THE ADF.

SAIDU AMBASSADOR ALI AL-CHA'ER PRESENTED ARAB DETERRENT FORCES (ADF) COMMANDER SAMI KHATIB WITH A CHECK FOR \$9 MILLION ON MARCH 27, TO HELP MAINTAIN THE ADF. (THE ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS ON MARCH 28 IN CAIRO VOTED TO EXTEND THE ADF MANDATE FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS BEGINNING APRIL 28.)

7. RECONCILIATIONS.

THERE HAVE BEEN TWO RECONCILIATIONS AMONG LEBANESE FIGURES THIS WEEK. ON MARCH 24
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KAMAL AL ASSAD AND THE 'IMAM MUSA SADR MET TOGETHER FOR THE FIRST TIME IN RECENT MEMORY. FORMER PRIME MINISTER SA'EB SALAAM AND MUFTI HASSAN KHALID, WHO HAVE ALSO LONG REFUSED TO SPEAK TO EACH OTHER, LUNCHEDED TOGETHER AT THE SAUDI AMBASSADOR'S HOME ON MARCH 25.

8. AID TO REFUGEES:

THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS MET WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS ON MARCH 30 TO DISCUSS AID TO REFUGEES. AFTER THE MEETING, PRIME MINISTER HOSS SAID ELECTRICITY HAD BEEN RESTORED IN TYRE. NO NEW MEASURES TO AID REFUGEES WERE ANNOUNCED.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AGREEMENTS, ARMISTICE, POLITICAL SITUATION, COMBAT OPERATIONS, LIBERATION FRONTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 mar 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BEIRUT01742
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780138-0058
Format: TEL
From: BEIRUT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780310/aaaaaiic.tel
Line Count: 189
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 240081b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 BEIRUT 1707
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3099742
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 30, 1200 HOURS LOCAL
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE, PLO, (ARAFAT, YASIR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/240081b7-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014